

Amendments to the Claims:

This listing of the claims replaces all prior versions of the claims.

Claims:

Claims 1-9. (canceled)

10. (withdrawn) A method of determining whether or not the binding of a molecule to a ligand is specific, which method comprises:

(i) treating a sample comprising the molecule with a solid phase carrier onto which is immobilized the ligand to obtain a once-treated liquid,

(ii) extracting the molecule bound to the ligand immobilized on the solid phase carrier in (i) to obtain a ligand-immobilized solid phase carrier extract 1,

(iii) treating the once-treated liquid obtained in (i) with a solid phase carrier onto which is immobilized the ligand to obtain a twice-treated liquid,

(iv) extracting the molecule bound to the ligand immobilized on the solid phase carrier in (iii) to obtain a ligand-immobilized solid phase carrier extract 2,

(v) comparing and/or analyzing the molecule contained in the ligand-immobilized solid phase carrier extract 1 and the molecule contained in the ligand-immobilized solid phase carrier extract 2, and

(vi) identifying a molecule, which is detected in the ligand-immobilized solid phase carrier extract 1 and which is not detected in the ligand-immobilized solid phase carrier extract 2 or which is detected in the ligand-immobilized solid phase carrier extract 2 at a significantly lower level than in the ligand-immobilized solid phase carrier extract 1, on the basis of (v), whereupon the molecule is determined to be specific for the ligand.

11. (withdrawn) The method of claim 10, which comprises repeating (iii) and (iv) twice or more.

12. (currently amended) A method of determining whether or not the binding of a target molecule to a ligand is specific, ~~which~~ the method comprises:

(i) dividing a sample into first and second portions, and treating the first portion with a solid phase carrier comprising an onto ~~which is~~ immobilized ~~an~~ inert substance to obtain a first once-treated liquid,

(ii) treating the first once-treated liquid with a solid phase carrier comprising an onto ~~which is~~ immobilized a ligand to obtain a first twice-treated liquid,

(iii) extracting the target molecule bound to the ligand immobilized on the solid phase carrier in (ii) to obtain a ~~ligand-immobilized solid phase carrier~~ first extract 1,

(iv) treating the second portion with a the solid phase carrier comprising the onto ~~which is~~ immobilized ~~the~~ ligand to obtain a second ~~first~~ once-treated liquid,

(v) treating the second ~~first~~ once -treated liquid with a the solid phase carrier comprising the onto ~~which is~~ immobilized ~~the~~ ligand to obtain a second twice-treated liquid,

(vi) extracting the target molecule bound to the ligand immobilized on the solid phase carrier in (v) to obtain a ~~ligand-immobilized solid phase carrier~~ second extract 2,

(vii) comparing and/or analyzing the target molecule contained in the ligand-immobilized solid phase carrier first extract 1 and the target molecule contained in the ligand-immobilized solid phase carrier second extract 2, and

(viii) identifying a the target molecule as being specific for the ligand if the target molecule ~~, which~~ is detected in the ligand-immobilized solid phase carrier first extract 1 and ~~which is~~ not detected in the ligand-immobilized solid phase carrier second extract 2, or ~~which is~~ detected in the ligand-immobilized solid phase carrier second extract 2 at a significantly lower level than in the ligand-immobilized solid phase carrier first extract 1, ~~on the basis of (vii)~~, ~~whereupon the molecule is determined to be specific for the ligand.~~

13. (original) The method of claim 12, wherein the inert substance is stearic acid.

14. (currently amended) The method of claim 12, wherein the inert substance is structurally similar to the ~~subject~~ ligand, and does not possess the physiological activity possessed by the ligand.

15. (withdrawn) The method of claim 10, wherein the sample is a biological sample.

16. (original) The method of claim 12, wherein the sample is a biological sample.

17. (withdrawn) The method of claim 10, which further comprises calculating the binding constant of the molecule binding to the ligand.

18. (currently amended) The method of claim 12, which further comprises calculating the binding constant of the target molecule binding to the ligand.